'WHICH MEN?' HOW AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES HELPS EXPLAIN WOMEN'S POLITICAL UNDER-REPRESENTATION

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Progress towards gender equality in politics is striking. With the help of electoral gender quotas in 130+ countries, women's national legislative representation more than doubled in the last 20 years. Other historically marginalized groups – racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, immigrants, and indigenous peoples – are also increasingly making their way into our parliaments. Political institutions are, then, more inclusive today than they have ever been. Yet, equal representation has not been fully realized: some marginalized groups have seen a decline, and men from dominant social and economic groups – hereafter 'elite men' – remain numerically dominant.[1] Indeed, as of January 2014, there were no known countries where elite men did not hold a disproportionately high share of positions in national elective office (Hughes 2015).

To make sense of these patterns, gender and politics scholars have increasingly studied the ways that gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and other social categories to shape women's descriptive representation, the numbers of women who are elected. Here, we suggest that intersectionality – a central concept in the study of women's political representation – has much to offer the study of *men's* over-representation. Furthermore, studying differences among men, and revealing that it is only some men who are universally over-represented in politics, helps us to better understand ongoing gender inequality. We focus here on two cases – India and the UK – and different intersections – caste, religion, and gender in India; and social class and gender in the UK. In these cases, public debates surrounding gender quotas have laid bare the gate-keeping practices that maintain elite men's political power, practices that in many other cases are hidden from view.

[1] We use the term "elite" to include a range or racial, ethnic, religious, caste, and class groups that have social and/or economic privilege.

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO MEN AND POLITICS

'Intersectionality' was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscriminiation Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." Crenshaw's aim was to better understand how forces of oppression intersect in complex ways to shape the experiences and outcomes of Black women in the United States. Thereafter, intersectionality has been applied to a broad range of intersecting social hierarchies – not just race and gender, but also class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, indigeneity, sexuality, and so on (McCall 2005). Gender and politics research has followed this path, asking "which women" are represented in our political institutions (Smooth 2011). Taking seriously women's differences and inequalities among them begs questions about the nature of material, cultural, and political barriers to equal representation, draws attention to new explanations for gender inequality, and shifts recommended solutions.

Intersectionality is not only the study of multiple oppressions. It is also the ways that individuals experience privilege and marginalization. Indeed, gender and politics research reveals that racial, ethnic, and religious minority women are not universally underrepresented relative to majority women and minority men (Hughes 2011). For example, in the Netherlands and Belgium, ethnic minority men are perceived as a greater threat to elite men's power than ethnic minority women, increasing ethnic minority women's desirability to party selectors (Celis et al. 2014). Still, differences among men have received little systematic attention from gender and politics scholars.

Research seeking to unpack inequalities among men can draw from a body of scholarship on men and masculinities, which has for decades explicitly theorized power differences among men. Men are seen as occupying varying positions in social hierarchies, and as simultaneously constrained and enabled by their identities and statuses. Given that hegemonic masculinity ideologically legitimates the subordination of women, this literature also points to the ways that inequalities among men might

contribute to inequalities between men and women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Unfortunately, however, research has generally not considered the extent to which different groups of men have varied access to elected office, or why.

Here, we suggest that politics and gender scholars should bridge these approaches, drawing insights from intersectionality scholarship and from men and masculinities research, to interrogate 'which men' are represented in politics. To illustrate what we can learn from an intersectional approach to men's overrepresentation, we draw from our respective work on quota debates in India and the United Kingdom.

IF WOMEN WIN, WHO LOSES? DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION AS A ZERO SUM GAME

Our first case is India, where caste, tribe, religion, and gender are all politically salient, and we classify 'elites' as upper-caste Hindus. Quotas have a long and contested history in India, tracing back to the early 1900s. But, only reserved seats for Scheduled (low-ranking) Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCSTs) survived India's transition to independence. Whether to extend quotas in the national legislature to Muslims, other disadvantaged castes (called Other Backward Classes, or OBCs), and women has been bitterly disputed, and quota debates reveal much about power dynamics in Indian politics.

Legislators formally introduced a national gender quota in 1996. The Women's Reservation Bill (WRB) would reserve one-third of seats, including SCST seats, for women. Notwithstanding widespread public support of the Bill and successful local gender quotas dating from 1993, opposition has at times reached fever pitch, with "some MPs almost coming to blows," and copies of the WRB being torn up (Htun 2004:448; Jensenius 2016; Randall 2006).

Of particular interest here is the zero-sum anti-quota argument which posits that a gender quota would benefit high-caste women at the expense of lower-caste and Muslim men. OBC men have been

particularly vocal. For instance, in 1997, OBC party leader Sharad Yadav asked, "Do you think these women with short hair can speak for women, for our women…" and dubbed this threatening group of elite women the "bobbed-hair brigade" (*The Hindu* 2015; Randall 2006). Although less vociferous, Muslim MPs have expressed similar concerns.

Opposition of OBC and Muslim men to the quota for women distracts from the stark reality that upper caste, elite men are overwhelmingly overrepresented: upper caste Hindus hold 45% of Lok Sabha seats, 5.6 times their population share; men hold 89% of seats, more than 1.7 times their share of the population. OBCs and Muslims, alternatively, have just 30%-50% of the seats they would if they were proportionally represented, and their seat share has been declining over time, to less than 20% today (Jaffrelot and Verniers 2015). Women hold just 11% of seats, and their share of SCST seats is greater than their share of general seats, suggesting elite women do not have the stranglehold over power enjoyed by elite men.

By focusing on variation in men's descriptive representation, the overrepresentation of elite men in India comes into sharp focus. Numerically, elite men (high-caste Hindu men) hold a disproportionate share of power and therefore have the most to lose from a gender quota, but it is marginalized men (OBC and Muslim men) who are leading the anti-quota charge. Elite men are depriving marginalized men of their place in politics, but marginalized men are confronting elite women instead. Why? One explanation is that elite men's dominance is taken-for-granted, such that women's political advances are seen as a credible threat not to elite men's power, but to marginalized men. Marginalized men may also be making a strategic choice. Elite men's dominance may be harder to challenge; women are the easier target. In either case, persistent political underrepresentation of women in India may have little to do with women or their characteristics and qualifications; the culprit is the unquestioned and unchallenged political dominance of elite men.

Our second case is the United Kingdom, where we focus on intersections of gender and social class, and 'elite' are upper- and middle-class men as measured by their occupation and education. In the

UK, some men politicians, commentators, and academics have become increasingly critical of women's descriptive representation, frequently on the grounds that it poses a threat to other marginalized groups. Women's gains – which in 2015 reached 30% and in 2017 32% in the House of Commons – are seen as coming at the expense of the representation of working-class men, who constituted only 5% of MPs in 2015 (based on occupational data; Heath 2015; figures for 2017 are not yet available). The expansion of women's representation is constructed as a zero-sum game between middle-class women and working-class men.

The pitting of middle-class women against working-class men has been most explicit during debates over all-women's shortlists (AWS), the Labour party's gender quota used in 1997, and since the 2005 general election. In a 2012 parliamentary debate, a male Conservative Party MP challenged:

> Does the hon. Lady agree that one of the biggest disadvantages a man from a working-class background in one of our large inner cities might face is the existence of all-women shortlists?
> Nuttall (Conservative) (12 Jan 2012, 409)

To which a Labour woman MP responded:

> My hon. Friend [Anne Begg] might also say to the hon. Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) that historically it was the practice of the Conservative party to have all-male shortlists. What was the disadvantage to the men with manual skills in those all-male shortlists?
> Dame Joan Ruddock (Lab) (12 Jan 2012, 409)

In her interjection, Ruddock posits that recruitment by the Conservatives was, and remains, classed, and that this is revealed by the failure of working-class men to have been able to successfully

negotiate these institutions prior to the entrance of greater numbers of Conservative women, who even today are just 21% of Conservative MPs; the same percentage as in 2015.

Turning to the Labour party – 45% of its MPs are women, up from 43% in 2015 – the accusation is even more explicit: AWSs directly prevent the selection of working-class men because men are excluded from some selections. At the individual level this criticism has purchase: a particular working-class man might be ruled out because an individual constituency is classified an AWS (Childs 2004). Working-class men's chance of selection in open constituencies, though, has little to do with women's sex/gender and everything to do with the contemporary preference for the middle-class professional politician.

CONCLUSIONS

Much current research on women's representation is attentive to women's within-group differences, examining which women are present, why, and to what substantive and symbolic effect. We contend that by applying an intersectional approach to men's descriptive representation, different explanations for men's persistent overrepresentation come into sharper focus. Attention to the exclusion of some groups of men undermines arguments that the status quo is driven by biological sex differences – that men are 'naturally' predisposed towards politics – or by men's collective merit. Instead, the lack of parity in politics is shown to be rooted in elite men's desire to maintain the political power and privilege that they have historically held on the basis of their gendered, raced, and classed positions.

If the reason for women's persistent underrepresentation is that elite men have power which they seek to protect, then interventions to redress gender imbalance also shift. The answer is not to increase women's education, skills, and resources. Gender quotas should not be regarded as compensation for women's political inadequacies, but instead a way to loosen elite men's grip on the legislative seats that are not 'naturally' or 'meritocratically' theirs. Men's opposition to gender quotas is hereby reconsidered: is it about quotas per se, or about quotas for women? In both our cases we contend that

zero-sum criticism is much less a principled call for the representation of other marginalized groups and more an anti-feminist argument deployed to undercut women's claim on political power. Elite men draw attention away from their political over-representation by scapegoating elite women, and they may find support from marginalized men, for whom blocking women's advances is easier than challenging elite men's rule. Hostility is, then, not always towards group representation, nor necessarily against strong interventions, but rather hostility towards quotas for women when it threatens elite men's political privilege.

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